

United States Government

Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: June 6, 2003

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS
(DOE/EIS-0285/SA-161-Columbia Falls-Trego)

TO: Joe A. Johnson
Natural Resource Specialist -TFS/Kalispell

Proposed Action: Vegetation Management for the Columbia Falls-Trego, 1/1 to 46/9 Transmission Line ROW. The line is a 115 kV Single Circuit Transmission Line with 100 foot easement width. The proposed work will be accomplished in the indicated sections of the transmission line corridor.

Location: The ROW is located in Lincoln and Flathead County, Montana being in the Spokane Region.

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to clear unwanted vegetation in the rights-of-ways and around transmission line structures that may impede the operation and maintenance of the subject transmission line. All work will be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards. BPA plans to conduct vegetation control with the goal of removing tall growing vegetation that is currently or will soon be a hazard to the transmission line.

Analysis: This project meets the standards and guidelines for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

Planning Steps:

1. Identify facility and the vegetation management need.

The work involved will be to clear tall growing vegetation that is currently or will soon pose a hazard to the lines and selectively eliminating tall growing vegetation before it reaches a height or density to begin competing with low-growing vegetation. All work will take place in existing rights-of-ways.

Also, all off right-of-way trees that are potentially unstable and will fall within a minimum distance or into the zone where the conductors swing will be removed. All work will be accomplished by selective vegetation control methods to assure that there is little potential harm to non-target vegetation and to low-growing plants. Desirable low-growing plants will not be disturbed. The work will provide system reliability.

The vegetation control is designed to provide a 7-10 year maintenance free interval. The overall vegetation management scheme will be to initially clear and remove all tall growing brush utilizing machine and hand cutting methods as outlined in the attached checklist.

In addition, BPA line personnel will be treating grass and low growing brush 30 feet around structure sites for fire suppression as needed with herbicides.

Future cycles - As tall growing species are controlled, a 7-10 year entry treatment will be needed. Additional treatment of grasses and low growing brush around tower structures for fire suppression using herbicides will be done in the following years. Also a review of Danger trees and other hazards will take place at that time.

2. Identify surrounding land use and landowners/managers and any mitigation.

The subject corridor traverses rural, agricultural, Forest Service (Kootenai National Forest/Tally Lake District) and Montana Department of Lands (DNRC). During routine patrols, tall, encroaching trees and vegetation issues are identified and marked. If a danger or reclaim tree is identified as a potential threat to the integrity of the transmission line, appropriate action to remove the tree is taken. All landowners were notified of the upcoming work by letters.

Between spans 8/8 +210 feet to 8/8 +360, no vegetation control will be applied. Between 4/4 and 4/5 only topping and trimming will occur. All other issues seem to be resolved at this time.

3. Identify natural resources and any mitigation.

Several water resources (i.e. creeks, streams, rivers, etc) have been identified within the work corridor. A comprehensive listing of the water resources that may be impacted by vegetation control activities is listed in the attached checklist. Threatened and Endangered (T&E) wildlife/plant issues, visually sensitive areas, cultural resources or other natural resource issues have been identified and addressed along the work corridor. To avoid disturbance to T&E species and cultural resources, the following mitigation measures will be followed:

Bald Eagle

No loss of bald eagle habitat or prey items is anticipated. There would be no vegetation management activities during the wintering bald eagle season. If bald eagle activity is observed in the project area, project activity will be suspended until a revised assessment is performed. In addition, the Kootenai National Forest Murphy Ranger District has informed BPA that eagles do not nest in the area.

Bull Trout

Bull Trout are known to inhabit several waterways within the project area as identified by SreamNet and Northwest Sub Basin Geographic Data databases. These waterways and other potential fish bearing waterways traverse the spans as identified in the attached checklist. The following buffers and mitigation measures will be observed to avoid disturbing any potential fish habitat:

- Low-growing vegetation that provides shade will be protected. A 35-foot buffer will be observed to protect the streams canopy.

- No herbicides will be applied near these waterways and other potential fish bearing waterways. Only cutting and topping will be performed as necessary.
- Cut trees will not be felled into any stream unless directed to do so by the State or Federal fish & wildlife.
- Vehicles will be kept away from water channels to minimize erosion and sedimentation of waters.
- Standard erosion control practices will be employed, if necessary, to prevent sedimentation of waters.

Plant Species

No species of plant T&E species are present or have been observed.

Cultural Resources

No cultural resources have been identified. Project area includes land owned by USFS, State or private entities. If archaeological material is discovered during the course of vegetation management activities, all work will be halted and a professional archaeologist will be notified.

Issues concerning wildlife, fish, plants and cultural resources have been addressed and work within the project corridor is expected to have “no effect” on any listed species or cultural resources therefore there would be no cumulative effects for any T&E species within the project corridor. If any T&E animal activity is observed, project activity will be suspended until a revised assessment is performed.

Prior to the beginning of the work, the contractor will be provided with a set of the project maps, supplemental information as well as with a list of management prescriptions from the Vegetation Management EIS.

4. Determine vegetation control and debris disposal methods.

A licensed contractor would undertake the proposed work. The unwanted vegetation would be removed by employing manual and mechanical selective cutting methods as well as herbicide application along selected spans of the right-of-way.

In areas where structures are more than 200 feet from any water body, a 30 foot area will be treated for fire suppression using a mixture of Sprakil S-5 (5% tebuthiuron) & Arsenal 0.5 granule (Imazapyr) in a mixture of ¼ Arsenal to ¾ Sprakil. To prevent resprouting, cut surfaces of some stumps will be treated with Pathfinder II (triclopyr).

Debris will be disposed by:

Lop and Scatter – Branches of a fallen tree are cut off (lopped) by axe or chainsaw, so the tree trunk lies flat on the ground. The trunks are occasionally cut in 1 to 2 m (4 to 8 ft) lengths. The cut branches and trunks are then scattered on the ground, laid flat and left to decompose.

Chip – Mechanical brush disposal unit cuts brush into chips 4 inches or less in diameter and spread over the ROW, piled on ROW or trucked off site. Trunks too large for the chipper are limbed and the limbs chipped. Trunks are placed in rows along the edge of the right-of-way or scattered, as the situation requires.

Mulched – Mulching is a debris treatment that falls between chipping and lop and scatter. The debris is cut into 1 to 2 foot lengths, scattered on the right-of-way and left to decompose. This method is used when terrain and conditions do not allow the use of mechanical chipping equipment.

5. *Determine revegetation methods, if necessary.*

No revegetation will be conducted at this time due to very low ground disturbance. Any need for re-seeding will be continually assessed as the project work progresses and will be performed if the need arises. In addition, equipment will be power washed to prevent the spread of weeds.

6. *Determine monitoring needs.*

Areas that were treated with Pathfinder II herbicide will be checked one year later to determine effectiveness.

7. Prepare appropriate environmental documentation.

No other environmental documentation is needed.

Findings: This Supplement Analysis finds that 1) the proposed actions are substantially consistent with the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285) and ROD, and; 2) there are no new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed actions or their impacts. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Michael A. Rosales

Michael A. Rosales
Environmental Scientist

CONCUR: /s/ Robert Beraud for
Thomas C. McKinney
NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: 06/18/2003

Attachment

cc:

L. Croff – KEC-4
T. McKinney – KEC-4
C. Leiter – KEP-4
J. Meyer – KEP-4
M. Rosales – KEPR/Bell-1
P. Key – LC-7
J. Hilliard Creecy – T-DITT2
D. Hollen – TF/DOB-1
J. Lahti – TFS/Bell-1
S. Vickers – TFS/Bell-1
M. McCracken – TFSU/Kalispell
Environmental File – KEC
Official File – KEP-4 (EQ-14)

**Vegetation Management Checklist
(Columbia Falls-Trego)**

1. IDENTIFY FACILITY AND THE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT NEED

1.1 Describe Right-of-way.

See Handbook — [List of Right-of-way Components](#) for checkboxes and the requirements for the components [Rights-of-way](#), [Access Roads](#), [Switch Platforms](#), [Danger Trees](#), and [Microwave Beam paths](#).

Corridor Name	Corridor Length & kV	Easement width	Miles of Treatment
Columbia Falls-Trego	45 miles / 115kv	100 feet	45 miles

Right Of Way:

- Right-of-Way – clearing in right-of-way
- Transmission Structures – clearing around
- Wood Poles - fire protection clearing
- Reclaim (“C”) Trees
- Danger Tree clearing

1.2 Describe the vegetation needing management.

See handbook — [List of Vegetation Types](#), [Density](#), [Noxious Weeds](#) for checkboxes and requirements.

Vegetation Types:

- Douglas Fir
- Pine
- Spruce
- Larch
- Cottonwood
- Aspen
- Density: Low (50 stems or less/ per acre)

1.3 List measures you will take to help promote low-growing plant communities. If promoting low-growing plants is not appropriate for this project, explain why. See Handbook — for requirements and checkboxes.

Tall-growing vegetation that is currently or will soon be a hazard to the line will be removed. (In places where tall growing vegetation must be left in place, it may not be possible to promote low-growing plants.)

Vegetation that will grow tall will be selectively eliminated *before* it reaches a height or density to begin competing with low-growing species.

Desirable low-growing plants will not be disturbed. Only selective vegetation control methods that have little potential to harm non-target vegetation will be used.

1.4 Describe overall management scheme/schedule.

See Handbook - [Overall Management Scheme/Schedule](#).

Initial entry – Danger Trees/”C” Trees will be cut, r/w brush cut & mulched as needed by contract brush crews, some cut stump treatment using herbicides may be required. BPA line personal will be treating grass and low growing brush 30 feet around structure sites for fire suppression as needed with herbicides.

Subsequent entries – Some treatment of grass and low growing brush 30 feet around structure sites for fire suppression using herbicides will need to be done the next few years.

Future cycles – No major brush/danger tree control will be needed for 7-10 years

2. IDENTIFY SURROUNDING LAND USE AND LANDOWNERS/MANAGERS

2.1 List the types of landowners and land uses along your corridor.

See Handbook — [Landowners/Managers/Uses](#) for requirements, and [List of Landowners/Managers/Uses](#) for a checkbox list.

Rural

Agricultural

Forest Service - Kootenai National Forest / Tally Lake District

Montana State Department of Lands (DNRC)

2.2 Describe method for notifying right-of-way landowners and requesting information (i.e., doorhanger, letter, phone call, e-mail, and/or meeting). Develop landowner mail list, if appropriate.

See Handbook — [Methods for Notification and Requesting Information](#) for requirements.

Most owners have been notified by mail through BPA’s Real Property Services, others will be notified by the contractor before work starts on their property

2.3 List the specific land owner/landuse measures — determined from the handbook or through your consultations with the entities — that will be applied.

See handbook — [Requirements and Guidance for Various Landowners/Uses](#) for requirements and guidance, also [Residential/Commercial](#), [Agricultural](#), [Tribal Reservations](#), [FS-managed lands](#), [BLM –managed lands](#), [Other federal lands](#), [State/ Local Lands](#).

Span		Landowner/use	Specific measures to be applied
To	From		
8/8+210’	8/8+360’	Thomas S. McCrea / Orchard Tree Agreement	No Control
4/4	4/5	Montana State Solder’s Home	We will top/Trim only

2.4 Review any existing landowner agreements (e.g. tree/brush Permits or Agreements). List in table above any provisions that need to be followed and where they are located.

See handbook — [Landowner Agreements](#) for requirements.

One active agreement, see item 2.3

2.5 List any known casual informal use of the right-of-way by non-owner publics. List any constraints or measure's to take due to the informal use.

See handbook — [Casual Informal Use of Right-of-way](#) for requirements.

None Known

2.6 List other potentially affected people, agencies, or tribes (that are not landowners/managers) that need to be notified or coordinated with. Describe method of notification and coordination.

See handbook — [Other Potentially Affected Publics](#) for requirements and suggestions.

None

3. IDENTIFY NATURAL RESOURCES

See Handbook — [Natural Resources](#)

3.1 List any water resources (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands) that may be impacted by vegetation control activities. For each water body describe the control methods and requirements or mitigation measures that will be used.

See Handbook — [Water Resources](#) for requirements for working near water resources including buffer zones.

Span		Waterbody	T&E?	Method	Herbicide	Application Technique	Buffer
From	To						
3/5	3/6	Flathead River	Bull Trout	Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
8/8	9/1	Whitefish River	Bull Trout	Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
9/7+700'	9/8	Pond on N side of r/w		Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
15/2	15/5	Spencer Lake on south side		Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
15/5+320'	15/6-460'	Pond on r/w		Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
16/1+140'		Creek	Bull Trout	Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
20/5+487'		Creek	Bull Trout	Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
28/2-325'		Creek	Bull Trout	Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
30/7+320'	30/7+470'	Swamp		Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	
31/5	31/6	Creek runs down r/w	Bull Trout	Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet

31/8+ 300'		Creek	Bull Trout	Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
33/2+ 233'		Creek	Bull Trout	Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
38/4	35/1	Stillwater River	Bull Trout	Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
36/7	36/8	Swamp		Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
38/1	38/3	Sunday Creek—runs down r/w, crossing @ 38/3 -200'	Bull Trout	Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
39/9	39/10	Swamp		Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet
41/2		Blue Lake 150' to the North	Bull Trout	Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	
43/6	43/7	Pond on N. ½ of r/w		Cutting/Topping as necessary	None	None	35feet

3.2 If planning to use herbicides, list locations of any known irrigation source, wells, or springs (landowners maybe able to provide this info if requested).

See Handbook — [Herbicide Use Near Irrigation, Wells or Springs](#) for buffers and herbicide restrictions.

None identified at this time

3.3 List below the areas that have Threatened or Endangered Plant or Animal Species and the name of the species, and any special measures that need to be taken due to their presence. Attach any BAs, T&E maps, or letters from US Fish and Wildlife.

See Handbook — [T&E Plant or Animal Species](#) for requirements and determining presence.

T&E Species	Method/mitigation or avoidance measures
Bald Eagles	Care taken to not disturb any nesting sites, large DT's and "C" trees checked before cutting Murphy Ranger District, Kootenai National Forest, has advised us that the Eagles do not nest in the area; They only come down during the winter for food.

Bull Trout	§ Low-growing vegetation that provides shade along waterways will be protected. A 35-foot buffer will be observed to protect the streams canopy.
	§ No herbicides will be applied near these waterways and other potential fish bearing waterways. Only cutting and topping will be performed as necessary.
	§ Cut trees will not be felled into any stream unless directed to do so by the state or federal fish & wildlife.
	§ Vehicles will be kept away from water channels to minimize erosion and sedimentation of waters.
	§ Standard erosion control practices will be employed, if necessary, to prevent sedimentation of waters.

3.4 List any other measures to be taken for enhancing wildlife habitat or protecting species.

See Handbook — [Protecting Other Species](#) for requirements.

Species	Measures
Various areas with Bull Trout	No herbicides will be used close to any body of water. Cut trees will not be felled into any stream unless directed to do so by the state or federal fish & wildlife.

3.5 List any visually sensitive areas and the measures to be taken at these areas.

See Handbook — [Visual Sensitive Areas](#) for requirements.

Describe sensitivity	Method/mitigation measures
None known at the present time	Cut, Chip, and or Trim/top as necessary

3.6 List areas with cultural resources and the measures to be taken in those areas.

See Handbook – [Cultural Resources](#) for requirements.

Describe sensitivity	Method/mitigation measures
None known	All land in control area is USFS, State, and private. Tribe land is not involved.

3.7 List areas with steep slopes or potential erosion areas and the measure and methods to be applied in those areas.

See Handbook – [Steep/Unstable Slopes](#) for requirements.

Describe sensitivity	Method/mitigation measures
Possible steep slopes on creek banks	Cut only as necessary, reseed disturbed areas

3.8 List areas of spanned canyons and the type of cutting needed.

See Handbook – [Spanned Canyons](#) for requirements.

No Spanned Canyons

4. DETERMINE VEGETATION CONTROL METHODS

See Handbook — [Methods](#)

4.1 List Methods that will be used in areas not previously addressed in steps above.

See Handbook — [Manual](#), [Mechanical](#), [Biological](#), [Herbicides](#) for requirements for each of the methods.

Span		Methods, including herbicide active ingredient, trade name, application technique
To	From	
Sub Station	Sub Station	In areas where structures are more than 200’ from any water body, a 30 foot area will be treated for fire suppression using a mixture of— Sprakil S-5 (5% tebuthiuron) & Arsenal 0.5 granule (Imazapyr) in a mixture of ¼ Arsenal to ¾ Sprakil. To prevent resprouting, cut surfaces of some stumps will be treated with Pathfinder II (triclopyr).

5. DETERMINE DEBRIS DISPOSAL AND REVEGETATION

5.1 Describe the debris disposal methods to be used and any special considerations.

See Handbook — [Debris disposal](#) for a checkbox list and requirements.

Chip (Mechanical brush disposal unit cuts brush into chips 4 in. or less in diameter, and spread over ROW, piled on ROW, or trucked off site. Trunks too large for the chipper are limbed and the limbs chipped. Trunks are placed in rows along the edge of the right-of-way or scattered, as the situation requires.)

Lop and Scatter (Branches of a fallen tree are cut off (lopped) by ax or chainsaw, so the tree trunk lies flat on the ground. The trunks are occasionally cut in 1-to-2-m (4-to-8-ft.) lengths. The cut branches and trunks are then scattered on the ground, laid flat, and left to decompose.)

Mulch (Mulching is a debris treatment that falls between chipping and lop-and-scatter. The debris is cut into 1-to-2-ft. lengths, scattered on the right-of-way and left to decompose. This method is used when terrain and conditions do not allow the use of mechanical chipping equipment.)

5.2 List areas of reseeding or replanting (those areas not already described in steps 1, 2, or 3).

See Handbook — [Reseeding/replanting](#) for requirements.

None

5.3 If not using native seed/plants, describe why.

N/A

5.4 Describe timing and any follow-up that will need to take place to ensure germination/success of seeding/planting.

N/A

6. DETERMINE MONITORING NEEDS

See handbook — [Monitoring](#) for requirements.

6.1 Describe the follow-up/monitoring cycle that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the vegetation control methods used.

Areas that were treated with Pathfinder II herbicide will be checked one year later.

6.2 Describe any follow-up or monitoring needed to determine if mitigation measures were effective.

None

7. PREPARE APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

See handbook — [Prepare Appropriate Environmental Documentation](#) for requirements. . Also prepare Supplement Analysis — [Supplement Analysis](#) — for signature.

7.1 Describe any potential project impacts or project work that are different than those disclosed in the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program EIS. Describe how those differences impact natural resources and if the differences are “substantial”.

None

7.2 Is there a need for additional NEPA documentation (i.e. Forest Service requirement, Record of Decision, supplemental EIS)? If so, attach.

No